



The United States Attorney's Office

## Central District of California

---



United States Attorney's Office

Central District of California

Thom Mrozek  
Public Affairs Officer

(213) 894-6947  
[thom.mrozek@usdoj.gov](mailto:thom.mrozek@usdoj.gov)

---

Return to the 2009 Press Release Index  
Release No. 09-038

March 27, 2009

### **SOUTH KOREAN WOMAN ARRESTED ON CHARGES OF IMPORTING BEAR BILE FROM CHINA**

A South Korean citizen was charged today with violating the Endangered Species Act by importing nearly a kilogram of bear bile harvested in China.

Seongja Hyun, a South Korean national who was staying in an apartment in Los Angeles (90020), was arrested last night and was charged today with the illegal importation of wildlife.

Hyun was arrested last night after being interviewed by agents with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. A criminal complaint was filed this morning in United States District Court. Hyun is expected to make her initial court appearance this afternoon.

The investigation into Hyun started earlier this week when agents with Customs and Border Protection seized a package at the U.S. Postal Service San Francisco International Mail Facility. The package, which had been sent from China, was found to contain four bags of a dark green crystalline substance believed to be bear bile, along with empty vials and labels for the bear bile, according to the affidavit in support of the complaint.

Yesterday, investigators oversaw the delivery of the package to the apartment where Hyun was staying. After Hyun accepted the package, she was interviewed by agents and she admitted that she was selling bear bile to others. During a search of the residence, agents found additional bear bile, vials and packaging.

Bear bile is typically extracted from living bears kept in cages in China and other countries by inserting a tube into the bear's gallbladder, according to the affidavit. Bear bile is considered by some to be a medicinal product and is typically consumed to treat various ailments or to act as an aphrodisiac.

Bears are protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), a treaty that has been signed by more than 150 countries and provides protection to fish, wildlife and plants that are or may become imperiled. In the United States, CITES is implemented through the Endangered Species Act, which only allows the importation of bear products if the country of origin has issued a valid foreign export permit and a valid import permit has been issued by the United States.

If convicted of the illegal importation of wildlife, Hyun faces a maximum statutory sentence of 20 years in federal prison.

*A criminal complaint contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty in court.*

This case was investigated by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, which received the assistance of the United States Postal Inspection Service and Customs and Border Protection.

####

Release No. 9-038

Return to the **2009 Press Release Index**